

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff,

- v. -

TONJA LEWIS,
a/k/a “J1,”

Defendant.

ORDER

19 Cr. 789 (PGG)

PAUL G. GARDEPHE, U.S.D.J.:

Defendant Tonja Lewis is scheduled to enter a guilty plea before a Magistrate Judge on July 29, 2021, and has requested that her guilty plea be taken over video conference or by telephone conference. (See July 28, 2021 Def. Ltr. (Dkt. No. 471))

Pursuant to the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (“CARES Act”), Section 15002(b)(2)(A), “the district judge in a particular case” must “find[] for specific reasons that the plea or sentencing in that case cannot be further delayed without serious harm to the interests of justice,” in order to permit either procedure to be “conducted by video teleconference, or by telephone conference if video teleconferencing is not reasonably available.” Pub. L. 116-136, Div. B, Title V, § 15002(b)(2)(A).

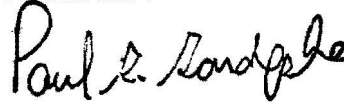
On June 15, 2021, the Chief Judge of this District entered a Standing Order authorizing the use of videoconferencing, or teleconferencing where videoconferencing is not reasonably available, for various criminal proceedings, including plea hearings. See In re Coronavirus/COVID-19 Pandemic, M10-468 Fifth Am. Standing Order (20 Misc. 176, Dkt. No. 6).

Here, because the Defendant, after consultation with counsel, has consented to proceeding remotely, and for the reasons set forth in the Defendant’s July 28, 2021 application

(see Dkt. No. 471), the Court finds that the Defendant's plea cannot be further delayed without "serious harm to the interests of justice." The Defendant's plea may be conducted by video teleconference, or by telephone conference if video teleconferencing is not reasonably available.

Dated: New York, New York
July 29, 2021

SO ORDERED.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Paul G. Gardephe". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The first letter "P" is large and prominent. The signature is positioned above a horizontal line.

Paul G. Gardephe
United States District Judge